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Nicaraguan Rebel Aid Backed

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The Republican-controlled Senate, clashing with the House yesterday, easily passed a bill that would allow continued U.S. covert aid for rebels fighting the Marxist-led Nicaraguan government.

Approval of the 1984 intelligence authorization bill—a victory for President Reagan—came on a voice vote after less than an hour of low-key debate.

The Democratic-led House voted 227 to 194 on Oct. 20 to cut all funds for the program. That was the second House vote to halt the CIA aid.

The intelligence authorization bill now goes to a House-Senate conference, which will try to work out a compromise between the sharply different bills passed by the two chambers.

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that the panel and its House counterpart are "closer in these matters than might be supposed."

Moynihan said that his committee had

agreed to allow continued covert actions based on a new "finding," submitted by the administration, that outlines the goals and details of the program.

Earlier plans were "too broad and too ambitious," he said, but the one outlined for the committee on Sept. 20 by CIA Director William J. Casey and Secretary of State George P. Shultz, had goals that were "more precise and much more limited."

And Moynihan noted assurances by administration officials that the program is not intended to overthrow Managua's Sandinista government.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) spoke against the bill, however, saying, "The president's course of action is illegal."

Leahy said Reagan is attempting to substitute covert and military programs for foreign aid.

Details of the authorization bill are classified, but the Senate measure is believed to authorize the same funding level as that approved last year, approximately \$19 million.